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A CHEYENNE OBSTACLE MYTH.

IN the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. vi. p. 44, I printed "A Blackfoot Sun and Moon Myth," which possessed one or two interesting features. Of these the chief was that individuals who were being pursued threw behind them certain objects or things, which formed barriers to the advance of the pursuer, to be surmounted only with difficulty, and so served to delay, if not to stop, the pursuit. This belief, which is extremely common in the folk-lore of the Old World, I was unaware of among our Indians up to the time when I heard the Blackfoot story referred to.

Among the Cheyennes I find a tale which contains this same element, as well as others which suggest that it may be a variant of a Blackfoot story, though its latter half more closely resembles another Blackfoot story which I have called "The Lost Children," and in the Cheyenne story the father is the villain, while in the Blackfoot story he is kindly and well disposed.

The *mih'ní*, which takes the rôle of the snake lover, is a mythical underwater monster, having the shape of a four-legged long-tailed reptile, sometimes with one or two horns, and sometimes more or less covered with hair. It is one of a considerable group of underwater animals found in the Cheyenne, as in the Blackfoot, religious system.

Once there was a lonely lodge, where lived a man, his wife, and two children — a girl and a boy. In front of the lodge, not far off, was a great lake, and a plain trail leading from the lodge down to the shore where they used to go for water.

Every day the man used to go hunting, but before starting he would paint his woman red all over, — her face, her arms, and her whole body. But at night, when he returned, he would always find her clean — the paint all washed off.

When he started out to hunt, she would go for water, leaving the children alone in the lodge; when she returned with the water, the paint would all be gone, and her hair unbraided. She always managed to get back with her water just before her husband arrived. He never brought in any meat.

Her husband thought it strange that every day, when he returned at night, the paint that he had put on his wife in the morning had disappeared, but he asked her no questions. One day he said to his daughter, "What does your mother do every day? When I go out, I paint her, and when I get back, she has no paint on."

The girl replied, "Whenever you start out hunting, she goes for water, and she is usually gone for a long time."

The next day, before he started out, the man painted his wife as usual, and then took his bow and arrows, and went out of the lodge. But instead of going off in the direction in which he usually went to hunt, he went around and down to the shore of the lake, and dug a hole in the sand, and buried himself there, leaving a little place where he could look out. He was going to watch.

The man had not been long hidden when he saw his wife coming, carrying a bucket. When she had come near to the water's edge, she slipped off her dress, and unbraided her hair; and then walked on, and sat down close to the water, saying, "*Ná shū ěh'*, I am here." Soon the man saw the water begin to move, and a mih'ni rose from the water, and crawled out on the land, and crept up to the woman, and wrapped itself all about her, and licked off all the red paint that was on her body.

When the man saw this, he rose from his hiding-place, and rushed down to the pair, and cut the monster to pieces with his knife, and cut off his wife's head. The pieces of the monster crept and rolled back into the water — they were not seen again. The man cut off the woman's arms at the elbow, and her legs at the knees, and threw the pieces and her head into the water, saying, "Take your wife." Then he opened the body, and took out a side of her ribs. He skinned the side of ribs, and then returned to the lodge.

When he reached the lodge, he said, "Ah, my little children, I have had good luck; I have killed an antelope, and have brought back some of the meat. Where is your mother?"

The children answered him, "Our mother has gone to bring water."

"Well," he said, "since I killed my meat sooner than I thought, I brought it back to camp. Your mother will be here pretty soon. In the mean time, I will cook something for you to eat, and will then go out again." He cooked a kettle of meat, and took it out to the children, and they both ate. The little boy, who was the younger, said to his sister, "Sister, this tastes like mother;" — he was the last one that had suckled.

"Oh," said his sister, "keep still; this is antelope meat." After the children had eaten, the little girl saved some of the meat for her mother to eat when she returned.

The father got his moccasins and other things together, and started off, intending never to come back. He was going to look for the tribe.

After he had gone, the children were sitting in the lodge, the girl making moccasins and putting porcupine quills on them. As they sat there, they heard some one outside say, "I love my children, but they do not love me; they have eaten me."

The girl said to her brother, "Look out of the door, and see who is coming." The boy looked out, and then cried out, very much frightened, "Sister, here comes our mother's head."

"Shut the door," cried the girl. The little boy did so. The girl picked up her moccasins and her quills, red, white, and yellow, and rolled them up, and seized her root digger. Meantime the head had rolled against the door, and called out, "Daughter, open the door." The head would strike the door, and roll part way up the lodge, and then fall back again.

The girl and her brother ran to the door, pushed it open, and stood on one side of it. The head rolled into the lodge and clear across it to the back. The girl and boy sprang out, the girl closed the door, and both children ran away as fast as they could. As they ran, they heard the mother in the lodge, calling to them.

They ran, and they ran, and at last the boy called out to his sister, "Sister, I am tired out, I cannot run any longer." The girl took his robe, and carried it for him, and they still ran on.

At last, as they reached the top of the divide, they looked back, and there they could see the head coming, rolling along over the prairie. Somehow it had got out of the lodge. The children kept running, but at last the head had almost overtaken them. The little boy was frightened nearly to death, and was tired out.

The girl said, "This running is almost killing my brother. When I was a little girl, and playing, sometimes the prickly pears were so thick on the ground that I could not get through them." As she said this, she scattered behind her a handful of the yellow porcupine quills, and at once there was behind her a great bed of high prickly pears with great yellow thorns. The bed was strung out for a long way in both directions across the trail they had made.

When the head reached this place, it rolled up on the prickly pears, and tried to roll over them, but it kept getting caught in the thorns, and could not get through. It kept trying and trying for a long time, and at last it did get loose from the thorns, and passed over. But by this time the girl and the boy had gone a long distance.

After they had gone a long way, they looked back, and again could see the head coming. Somehow it had got through. When the little boy saw the head again, it frightened him so that he almost fainted. He kept calling out, "Sister, I am tired out ; I cannot run any longer."

When the girl heard him speak thus, she said, as she was running, "When I was a little girl, I often used to find the bullberry bushes very thick." As she said this, she threw behind her a handful of the white quills, and where they touched the ground there grew up

a great grove of thick thorny bullberry bushes. This blocked the way, and the head stopped there for a long time, unable to pass through the bushes.

The children ran on and on, toward the place where the people had last been camped, but at length, as they looked back, they again saw the head coming.

The little boy called out, "Sister, I am tired out; I cannot run any longer." Again the girl threw quills behind — this time the red ones — and a great thicket of thorny rosebushes was formed, which stopped the head.

Again the children had gone a long way, but at last, once more, they saw the head coming, and the boy called out, "Sister, I am tired." Then the girl said, "When I was a little girl, playing, I often came to little ravines that I could not cross." She stopped, and drew the point of her root-digger over the ground in front of her, and made a little groove in the ground, and she placed the root-digger across this groove, and she and her brother walked over on the root-digger. When they had crossed over, the furrow became wider and wider and deeper and deeper, until it was a great chasm with cut walls, and at the bottom they could see a little water trickling.

"Now," said the girl, "we will run no longer; we will stay here."

"No, no," said the boy, "let us run."

"No," said the girl, "I will kill our mother here."

Presently the head came rolling up to the edge of the ravine, and stopped there, talking to the girl, and saying, "Daughter, where did you cross? Place your root-digger on the ground, so that I too may cross." The girl attempted to do so, but every time that she tried to, the boy pulled her back. At last she put it down, and the head began to roll over on the root-digger; but when it was half way across, the girl tipped the stick, and the head fell into the ravine, and the ravine closed on it.

After this, the children started on again to look for the people, and at last they found the camp, and drew near it. Before they had reached it, they could hear a man haranguing in the camp, and as they came nearer and nearer, they saw that it was their father. He was walking about the camp, calling out and saying that while he was out hunting, his two children had killed and eaten their mother, and that if the children came to the camp, they ought not to be allowed to enter it. When they heard this, the children were frightened; but still they went on into the camp. When they entered it, the people caught them, and tied their hands and feet, and the next day moved away, and left them there, tied.

In the camp there was an old, old dog who knew what had hap-

pened, and took pity on these children. That night she went into a lodge, and stole some sinew and a knife and an awl, and took them into a hole where she had her pups.

The next day, after the people had all gone, the children heard a dog howling, and presently they saw an old, old dog coming. She came to them, and said, "Grandchildren, I have come to take pity on you."

The girl said, "Untie me first, and I can untie my brother." So the old dog began to gnaw at the rawhide strings with which the girl's hands were tied. She had no teeth, and could not cut the cords, but they got wet, and began to slip, and the girl kept working her hands, and at last she got them free, and untied her legs, and then went and untied her brother. That evening they went about through the camp, picking up old moccasins to wear. Both children were crying, and the dog was crying, too. They sat on the hill near the camp, crying, for they had nothing to eat and no place to sleep in, and nothing to cover themselves with, and winter was coming on. They sat there, crying, with their heads hanging down; but the boy was looking about, and presently he said to his sister, "Sister, look at that wolf, it is coming right straight toward us."

"No," said the girl, "it is useless for me to look; I could not kill him by looking at him; we could not get him to eat."

"But look, sister," insisted the boy, "he is coming right up to us."

At last the girl looked, and when she looked at the wolf, it fell down dead. Then the dog brought the things that she had stolen, and with the knife they cut up the wolf, and from its skin they made a bed for the dog.

The children stayed in this camp, living well now, while the people in the main camp were starving. The children kept up a big fire day and night, and used big logs, so that it did not go out at all.

After they had eaten the wolf, they began to be hungry again. The girl was very unhappy, and one day she sat there, crying, the dog sitting by her, and the boy standing near looking about. Presently the little boy said, "Sister, look at that antelope coming."

"No," said the girl, "it is useless for me to look; looking will do no good."

"But look;" said the boy, "perhaps it will do as the wolf did." The girl looked, and it happened to the antelope as to the wolf—it fell down dead. They cut it up, and of its skin made a bed for themselves. They ate the flesh, and fed the old dog on the liver. The girl would chew pieces up fine for the dog, which had no teeth.

At last the antelope was all eaten, and again they grew hungry. Again the same thing happened. The boy saw a strange-looking

animal coming — it was an elk, which fell dead before the girl's look. She stretched the elk hide, and they used it for a shelter. With the sinews the dog had stolen, they sewed their moccasins, and mended their clothing.

When the elk meat ran out, the same thing happened. A buffalo was seen by the boy coming straight to their shelter, and the girl killed it by a look. They cut up the meat, and used the hide to make them a larger and better shelter. They stayed here until winter came and snow began to fall. They had only these two hides for shelter.

One night, when the girl went to bed, she made a wish, saying, "I wish that I might see a lodge over there in that sheltered place in the morning. I could sleep there with my brother and the dog, and could have a bed in the back of the lodge. I could make him a bow and some arrows, so that he could kill the buffalo close to the camp when they gather here in bad weather to use this underbrush for a wind-break." She also wished that her brother might become a young man, and that they might have meat racks in the camp and meat on them.

In the morning, when the boy got up and looked out, he said, "Sister, there is our lodge over there now." It was in the very place the girl had wished. They moved their things over to it, and took the fire over. When the boy entered the lodge, he was a young man. That winter he killed many buffalo, and they had plenty of meat.

One night, as she was going to bed, the girl made another wish. She was talking to her brother when she made it. She said, "Brother, our father has treated us very badly. He has caused us to eat our mother, and he had us tied up and deserted by the people. He has treated us badly. I wish that we knew how to get word to the camp, and I wish that we had two bears that we could cause to eat our father."

Next morning, when the girl got up, she saw in the lodge, sitting on either side of the door, two bears. She spoke to them, and said, "Hello, my animals, arise and eat;" and then she gave them food. She went out to one of the meat racks, and pulled from some meat that was hanging there, a piece of bloody fat, and spoke to a raven that was sitting in a tree near by, saying, "Come here; I wish to send you on an errand." When the raven had flown to her, she said to it, "Go and look for the camp of my people, and fly about among the lodges, calling, and when the people come out and ask each other, 'what is that raven doing? and what is he carrying?' drop down this piece of fat where there is a crowd gathered, and tell them that the people you came from have great scaffolds of meat."

The raven took the piece of fat in his bill and flew away. He found the camp, and flew about calling and calling, and a number of men who were sitting about the camp began to say to each other, "What is that raven carrying?" The raven dropped the meat, and some one who picked it up said, "Why, it is fresh fat."

Then the raven said, "Those people whom you threw away are still in the old camp, and they have scaffolds of meat like this." Then the raven flew away, and went back to the girl, and told what he had done.

An old man began to walk through the camp, crying out to the people, and saying, "Those children that we threw away have plenty of meat; they are in the old camp, and now we must move back to it as quickly as we can." The people tore down their lodges, and packed up and started back. Some of the young men went ahead in little groups of threes and fours, and reached the children's camp before the others. When they arrived there, the girl fed them, and gave them meat to carry back to the main camp. All the trees about the lodge were covered with meat, and the buffalo hides were stacked up in great piles.

After a time the whole village came to the place, and camped not far from the children's lodge, and all the people began to come to the lodge to get food. The girl sent word to her father not to come until all the rest had come. When they had been supplied, he should come and take his time, and not eat in a hurry.

She said to the bears, "I am going to send for your food last. After that person gets here, and has eaten, as he goes out of the lodge, I will say, there is your food. When I say this, you shall eat him up."

In the evening, when the last one of the people was going out of the lodge, she said to him, "Tell the people not to come here any more; my father is coming now."

When the father came, they fed him, and he was glad. He said, "Oh, my children, you are living nicely here; you have plenty of meat and tongues and back fat." He did not eat everything that the girl had set before him; he said, "I will take all this home for my breakfast."

After he had gone out of the lodge to return to the camp, the girl said to the bears, "There is your food, eat him up." The bears sprang after the father, and pulled him down. He called to his daughter to take her animals off, but they killed him there, and began to drag him back to the lodge. The girl said to them, "Take him off somewhere else and eat him, and what you do not eat throw into the stream."

What the bears did not eat they threw in the creek, and then they

washed their hands off, and no one ever knew what had become of the father. Since that time bears have eaten human flesh when they could.

The boy and the girl returned to the camp, and always afterward lived there well.

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NEW YORK, N. Y.